DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 030 510 RC 003 482

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Urban Education and the Mexican-American.

Pub Date 23 Aug 68

Note-9p.; Speech given at Ford Foundation Leadership Seminar, Albuquerque, New Mexico, August 23, 1968

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.55

Descriptors-*Bilingual Education, City Problems, Community Involvement, *Cultural Awareness, Curriculum Development, *Disadvantaged Youth, Dropouts, Educational Change, Educational Problems, Federal Aid, Language Handicaps, *Mexican Americans, Parent Participation, Professional Training, Teacher Education, *Urban Education, Urban Schools

With 90% of about 4.7 million Mexican Americans living in the 5 Southwest States and 80% of these living in an urban environment, Mexican American students face several educational problems in the urban setting, including high dropout rate, low educational achievement, and ineffective institutions. Schools fail to recognize the cultural richness of the student's bilingualism which can be made a positive force helping to retain personal identity and self-esteem. Possible solutions lie in the areas of teacher and administrator training, focusing on in-service curriculum, pre-service curriculum, recruitment and retention of teacher candidates, and scholarships and aid programs. By developing relevant curriculum and materials through redirecting available federal funds and through the community and school working together, the problems of Mexican American students in an urban environment can be met. Several statistics are included. (CM)

ED030510

Ford Foundation
Leadership Seminar
Albuquerque, New Mexico
August 23, 1968

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URBAN EDUCATION AND THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN

The recent appointment of Dr. Charles Smith as Special Assistant on Urban Education to the Commissioner of Education visibly signifies the intention of the U.S. Office of Education to recognize an explosive educational situation. But the appointment also indicates the general thinking on the problem. Dr. Charles Smith is black. And to quote him, "When you think urban problems today, you think black." I suspect that for a good part of the country this may be true, but for the Southwest you must also think brown, black, white, yellow, and certainly red. And in many cities in the Southwest, urban education is brown and nothing else.

I want to talk today about the Mexican-American and what he faces in the urban educational scene. There are about 4.7 million Mexican-Americans in the United States today. Well over 90% of them living in the five Southwest States. And over 80% of them living in an urban environment. Los Angeles has the third largest concentration of Mexicans in the western hemisphere. In East Los Angeles, for example, a special census in 1965 showed an increase of 6 per cent in the American population in the 5-year period, while the total population in the area declined by 5 per cent.

What are the educational challenges for the urban school when it turns toward its Mexican-American students? Let's take Los Angeles again. A larger percentage of the Mexican-American population were enrolled in school in 1965 than in 1960--60 percent compared to 52 percent. Enrollment in high school and college has increased. However, among the Mexican-Americans aged 25 and over, median school years completed declined slightly--from 8.1 to 7.7. In the spring of 1966 there were approximately 78 Mexican-American students

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among students at the University of California at Berkely. At the University of California, Los Angeles there were only 70 students in a student body of 26,000. At the same time UCLA had 600 Negro students.

A 1964 survey revealed that 39 percent of the Mexican-American population in Texas had less than a 5th grade education. In a Texas border city only 5 to 6 percent of the Mexican-American children entering first grade in 1964 knew enough English to go forward with the other children as they entered school. Dr. Tom Carter of the University of Texas at El Paso in a book soon to be published estimates that over 80 percent of the Mexican-Americans in Texas who start first grade never finish twelth grade. And there are a hell of a lot of Mexican-American youngsters in Texas and elsewhere who never get to the first grade.

The high school student demonstrations in Los Angeles, San Jose, San Antonio and in Edgewood right outside San Antonio clearly demonstrated that the Mexican-American youngster is very much aware of failure of the urban school to educate him. When you have at least two high schools in Los Angeles with a predominant Mexican-American student body with acknowledged student loss rates in excess of 50 percent--and San Antonio high schools graduating only 59 percent of those who started in 10th grade--the evidence of failure is very apparent.

Why is urban education failing the Mexican-American even to a greater extent than it does others. The first reason, as I see it, is the practice of designing curriculum for a student who is envisioned by the educators to be like they were in school. Then, to give it some special flavor called individual instruction, some instructional techniques are provided for the teacher that will permit her to go brown or go black occasionally. And even the compensatory education programs are the same curriculum, some new materials, but the same teachers with the same lack of skills for dealing with this

bilingual-bicultural child. For example, I want to pass on the remark I heard the other day that many educators consider anything done with a bilingual child as bilingual education.

And what I have just talked about is exactly what those high school youngsters were saying in their demonstrations. They were saying to hell with this jazz about kids being disadvantaged. The truth is that the school is a "disadvantaged institution." It may educate those whose mold fits the curriculum, but not many of the people of our mold had any hand in that curriculum. You see, if you talk about "disadvantaged children" this is in essence saying that they are inferior and not a great deal can be expected of them. This leads to self-fulfilling prophecy where children are put into "disadvantaged", "inferior" programs.

If, on the other hand, we focus on "disadvantaged institutions" this implies acceptance of responsibility for inadequate institutions or "institutional deprivation." A kid who doesn't learn to read by 5 or 6 may later learn to read, but if he is taught that he is "disadvantaged" i.e. "inferior" at 5 or 6, he may never overcome it. It burns my "you know what" when I think of the thousands of Mexican-American youngsters who have been tabbed as "disadvantaged" because they didn't come to school speaking English. Just think, they came to school with a rich potential to be bilingual--a most desired personal and national value in almost every country in the world except the English-speaking one. <u>And the school failed to even recognize this cultural richness!</u>

What these high school youngsters are really saying to us--and I totally endorse and support this position--is not that we need new institutions--disadvantaged as they may be--but that we need people who are willing to accept the responsibility for the consequence of their work; if necessary fighting for the resources needed to get the job done. These are "moral" traits which an expert may or may not have. High morale, which is one of the characteristics

of an effective institution, is related to "value infusion" and "pride." Few effective institutions consider their participants "disadvantaged." These youngsters are saying to us get rid of this "disadvantaged child" syndrome by which educators have been permitted to escape the responsibility for their failures. The fruits of this philosophy are now bearing on the streets and in the schools of the urban environment.

So one of the first things we must do in the urban school for the Mexican-American is develop curriculum and materials for him. And for him in the urban society--not a refined reflection of the agrarian migrant. One of the first places to start with this is a redirection of priorities of Federal and State funding. There are over 65 million dollars for Title I, ESEA, Migrant Education Funds. And over 80 percent of this amount will be directed toward the Mexican-American. Yet I can not find 20 million dollars throughout the country directed toward the improvement of the education of the urban Mexican-American. Monies must be secured and directed toward meeting these needs. At the same time we are re-directing our funding priorities, I want to see us digging deep for the ingredient in the curriculum that will provide the urban Mexican-American with the resources that will enable him to serve effectively himself and his society. This means the development of a program that commits itself to these principles:

(1) The Mexican-American child can learn. The language barrier is a false apology for the failures of the school.

(2) The Mexican-American child and parents have the same high aspirations and expectations as the Anglo and Negro.

(3) Language, Spanish for the Mexican-American child, is an effective tool for learning. To destroy his language is to destroy him as a person with identity and self-esteem.

(4) Training programs can be established which will enable the teacher and administrator to have confidence that they can be successful with the bilingual-bicultural child.

(5) The parents and the community must be involved in the decisions that direct the education of their children--and that the Mexican-American want to be a part of this process.

Let's take a closer look at what I just said. Already we are finding with the spreading use of bilingual education that the Mexican-American child can learn. And that with his mother tongue as the means by which he is taught educational concepts he can progress with his fellow students. Some schools in Florida, Texas, California, Michigan, and New Mexico are now able with bilingual education to refute the concept that a child must learn English before he can profit in our schools. In New York City an extensive bilingual education program is starting this fall involving several thousand Puerto Rican youngsters. So we do have the experience and the know how to turn the language barrier away and make his language a positive force in the child's life. Now the Mexican-American child can learn and still retain his identity and self-esteem.

In the area of training for teachers and administrators we are moving slower. Through the Bureau of Educational Personnel Development we are planning three teacher preparation conferences dealing specifically with the creation of action programs for new direction in the preparation of teachers. These conferences will involve teacher education institutions, school districts, state departments of instruction, and members of the Mexican-American community. The focus will be on the following areas:

(1) In-service curriculum and training techniques.

(2) Pre-service curriculum and training techniques.

(3) Recruitment and retention of teacher candidates.

(4) Scholarships and aid programs.

It is quite apparent that in teacher preparation two vital areas must be language and cultural awareness. The rise in cultural militancy among the young Chicanos is directly related to the appalling ignorance on the part of teachers about the Mexican-American and his role in the American Democracy. A big step forward in meeting the void in these two areas has been the pilot program in High Intensity Language Training with a full cultural awareness component conducted for the Teachers Corps at USC this summer. Fifty beginning interns who will work in schools with Spanish-speaking students have been in an eight week program designed to provide them with communication competency in Spanish. These interns will be serving in Texas, New Mexico, Missouri, and California. They will bring to the classroom and to the school two imperative needs of the teachers of Mexican-Americans--a language bridge and a cultural understanding. Such teacher preparation must become the primary commitment of every school district with Mexican-Americans.

With the creation of La Raza Unida the Mexican-American will have a viable vehicle that can give great strength to the development of techniques for making educational and social changes in his society.

Without a real partnership between the school and the community no basic solutions to the educational problems of the Mexican-American can be found. There can be no more of those school administrators who say, "I have no problems with my Mexican-Americans, I don't even see them." And this partnership must have at its core--the child, the parent, the teacher. The rest of the school organization must serve those. Although the community school board concept in New York has had some rough moments in its initial phase, its basic idea is sound and needs only the honing of experience to become effective. Community

action groups and organizations must be mobilized--yes mobilized if change is to come to what one person calls "the one institution ideally established to resist change."

I would add one more factor in this community-school partnership--that of the economic society. Business and industry has long recognized value of a successful educational system. And have participated in maintaining the concept of free public education. But they have not stirred themselves too often to become an active partnership in change. And whatever role in change they played was not associated with the main products and beneficiaries of the school--the children and the parents. But if we are to create diverse programs, really effective programs, then the resources of industrial technology must become a partner. Educational prescriptions are difficult to write--

but once written [illegible]

nologist also becoming an educational technologist and applying his skills to production of a better educational product to match the better industrial product now so zealously sought.

Let me close on this note. There have been two periods of reform in our schools prior to now. The first in the 1840's and 1850's was led by reformers who saw the schools as a vehicle to maintain moral and political order. They feared and hated urban life and sought to impose traditional agrarian ideals throughout the schools. They failed, of course, because the rising population in the cities saw the schools as an avenue for broad social, economic and political changes.

The second and far larger effort at reform took place at the turn of the century. The urban problems of the 1840's were pale in comparison with the post-Civil War growth of cities. With industrialization, rapid foreign immigration, and agricultural failures, came a rush to closely populated centers. With this rapid growth came the inevitable range of problems--all very familar

today--inadequate housing, rapidly shifting political patterns, inadequate housing, inadequate police and social welfare service. This reform took the posture of feed and clothe the poor and teach them to get jobs and to hold these jobs as dignified working people.

By the 1920's the schools were expanding in great numbers--and they were designed to teach simple intellectual and social skills and the folkways of the dominant culture. Their devotion to middle class ideology was single-minded--no cultural pluralism here. Their leadership, both inside and outside, was middle class and fundamentally afraid of the changes the city dweller might bring.

This is not another reform today. This is a revolution designed to tear apart and remake one of our most sacred institutions. The Mexican-American [illegible] the American scene--a vision of cultural diversity and of the school as the instrument for the creation of a society that truly accepts each man on his own terms. The Mexican-American sees the urban school as the one instrument that he can obtain, shape, and produce a fundamental change in the attitude of our society. A school where the hopes and joys of the child are raised and praised, not dimenished and destroyed. The one issue that unites all Mexican-American activitists is education. And this unification ranges from traditional social and political organizations long fighting this battle to the UMAS, MASA, and the Brown Berets. The urban Mexican-American is late getting into this battle. But he realizes that unless he gets in quickly and forcefully he will spend another half century fighting for survival from a position of linguistic and cultural isolation. As Dr. Smith told me, "Black militiants will not look out for the Mexican-American--he has his own bag to fight for."

The struggle in urban education can be narrowed to a single point. For the Mexican-American it is control of the schools in the hands of those who reject the school as a shaper of a monolingual, monocultural entity. They are saying that cultural superiority must be eliminated or cultural militancy will continue to rise. Cultural diversity must be the key ingredient in this new educational environment.

The urban Mexican-American will not remain a poor third behind the Anglo and the Negro because his school can not teach him. Nor will he allow society to destroy his linguistic and cultural heritage. He is moving directly into the arena where the future of the city, and his future will be decided--the school. As he moves in, he calls to all who believe in the richness of differences, the pluralistic society, in the great strength of diversity to join him.

Gentlemen, you have just completed a leadership program. I invite you to join me and the millions of Chicanos who are embarked on this revolution in our schools. It will be peaceful, but it will be successful. Viva la Causa, Viva La Raza! Muchas Gracias!